



## News Release

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(HOLDREGE, Neb.) - The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's board of directors approved a water leasing agreement with the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program at Friday's board meeting for a pilot project in 2016.

Central will offer to lease surface water from irrigation customers who agree to participate in the program. The maximum number of acres in the program will be capped at 3,000. Leased water will be credited to the Environmental Account in Lake McConaughy.

The Environmental Account (EA) is a block of water set aside in Lake McConaughy as part of Central's Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license conditions. The EA is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the benefit of the threatened and endangered species in the Platte Basin.

Beginning on Sept. 15 and continuing until Oct. 15, Central will accept offers from customers who agree not to irrigate acres with either surface water or groundwater in 2016. The Platte River Program will pay Central \$220/acre for each leased acre and Central will then pay the customer the same amount in the fall after verification that the lands were not irrigated.

The Program will also pay Central \$10,000 for administrative costs related to operating the pilot program.

It is anticipated that most of the acres enrolled in the program will consist of pivot corners and/or acres that are difficult for producers to irrigate.

Central will provide irrigation customers with additional details about the pilot program in the near future.

Also at Friday's board meeting (which was August's regularly scheduled meeting that was moved to July 31 because of schedule conflicts):

- The board approved a work order for \$189,000 to construct a pedestrian bridge over the Johnson Lake outlet canal. The bridge will be built adjacent to the highway bridge and will connect segments of the lake's hike/bike trail. Construction is tentatively scheduled to begin this fall.
- The directors approved a bid from the W.S. Bunch Co., of Omaha for \$357,425 to paint the large crane and hatch cover at the Kingsley Hydroplant. Under terms of the power purchase agreement with the Nebraska Public Power District, which buys the power generated at Kingsley Hydro, the expenditure is subject to approval by NPPD's board of directors.
- The board approved a motion to hold the Oct. 5 board meeting at the Lake McConaughy Visitors Center at 10 a.m., MDT.
- Civil engineer Cory Steinke reported that Lake McConaughy's elevation dropped slowly during July as inflows to the reservoir were more than twice normal levels for the month and flows in the South Platte River were also well above normal. The reservoir was at elevation 3,262.7 feet Friday morning; it was at elevation 3,263.3 on July 1. The lake is considered full for operational purposes at elevation 3,265.0.

The elevation has to be down to 3,260.0 feet by Oct. 1 to satisfy Federal Energy Regulatory Commission requirements.

He said the Climate Prediction Center at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is predicting that a strong El Niño weather pattern will continue over the coming months. Past El Niño events have coincided with some of the highest snowpack accumulation and ensuing runoff years in the Platte River Basin.

With carryover storage in the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's reservoirs on the North Platte River in Wyoming projected to be at or above normal, he said, making room in Lake McConaughy for future inflows will be an operational goal.

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